DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 245 322 EA 016 862

AUTHOR Wimpelberg, Robert K.
TITLE Administrative Inservice and Theories of Groups.
PUB DATE Apr 84
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 23-27, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrators; Agency Role; Educational Improvement; Educational Innovation; *Enrichment Activities; *Group Guidance; Grouping (Instructional Purposes); Group Instruction; Improvement Programs; *Inservice Education; *Management Development; Models; *Principals; Professional Development; Professional Training; *Self Help Programs; Theories; Voluntary Agencies

ABSTRACT

Voluntary organizations providing inservice activities for principals are the newest in the administrative development field. This paper explores those organizations' prospects, particularly the voluntary, administrator-directed "principals' center," and borrows its analytical framework from theories of group formation. The Principals' Center in New Orleans, Louisiana evolved from an interest in Roland Barth's informal learning program for Boston principals. The Center brings in outside "major" speakers or workshop leaders twice yearly and organizes smaller programs during the year. Although the New Orleans structure used the Harvard Center as its model, it differs in the fund-raising area, relying on businesses, foundations, and school districts, whereas Harvard is funded by the Graduate School of Education. Harvard's initial planning was also determined by university personnel, as opposed to New Orleans' board of principals. As interest groups, principals' centers require financial bases and membership groups, both complex issues. Incentives to elicit contributions are important, as is proof of successful training of members. Unlike Harvard, New Orleans is weak in material and solidary incentives, and must basically rely on purposive incentives grounded in forward-reaching curricula and a philosophy of mutual support. (KS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED245322

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Robert K. Wimpelberg

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ADMINISTRATIVE INSERVICE AND THEORIES OF GROUPS

Robert K. Wimpelberg

Department of Education
Tulane University
New Orleans, Louisiana 70118

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
April 1984

New Orleans — April, 1984

EA 016 862

ADMINISTRATIVE INSERVICE AND THEORIES OF GROUPS[1]

The provisions of certain goods and services traditionally associated with a single, clearly identified American institution have become "disaggregated" since World War II, according to observations by Sarason (1972) and Hodgkinson (1982). At one time an individual wishing to borrow money had virtually no options except to go to a bank; in the past few decades, the set of institutions making loans has expanded to include savings-and-loans, credit unions, finance associations, and more. Medical care offers a similar example. Treatment that could be obtained only through a stay in the hospital is now available from for-profit out-patient clinics and private physicians. And professional improvement for school personnel—once under the sole purvue of the university—is now provided by regional and national consultants, professional employee associations, research and training laboratories, and specialists within school districts.

The newest institutions in the disaggregating field of professional development for educational administrators are voluntary organizations that provide "inservice" activities for school principals (Carmichael, 1982; Southern Regional Education Board, 1983; NIE, 1982). Principals have the focus of attention because a variety of research orientations and theoretical developments have converged on the school level. Studies in the school efectiveness vein have reached general consensus that the managerial behavior of the principal is critical to the achievement of children "at risk" in certain settings (Shoemaker & Fraser, 1981; Cohen, 1981); several research agendas on organizational governance cite the school principalship as a critical, but little studied position within the organizational structure (Manasse, 1982; Morris et al., 1981; Boyd & Crowson, 1981); and the cyclical rediscovery of the potential for school sites to operate with some degree of autonomy within larger school districts—in the popular language, to be "loosely-coupled" with their central administration—has generated a special concentration on the school level within public school districts (Bidwell, 1965 & 1979; Weick, 1976).

The mere emergence of new "settings" chartered to engage in the re-training of school-site administrators is a noteworthy phenomenon, in and of itself (Sarason, 1972). However, it takes its professional impetus from the scholar's and practitioner's observation that traditional administrative preparation is generally insufficient to meet the principal's professional needs on the job and that more extensive course work in the traditional academic modes actually carries a negative correlation with some measures of leadership (Bridges, 1979; Gross & Herriot, 1965; Carmichael, 1982). There is a noticeable gap between the substance and training common to university programs that provide degrees and administrative certificates and the day-to-day demands in the work of school principals. And one explanation for the disaggregated state of inservice programs for school administrators today is that some education executives at the state and local levels, certain university- and foundation-based scholars, and a few reflective school principals have been "taking things into their own hands."

In this paper, I make an initial exploration of the current processes and prospects for non-traditional modes of administrative inservice for school-site administrators. The field of reference, here, is an array of newer organizations and curricular programs that have a reasonably clear ontology and structural cohesiveness grounded in a mission to improve the work of practicing principals. While the general reference group so defined includes novel university based certificating programs and state and local provisions for more concentrated learning/training resources brought to bear on people who manage schools, the primary unit for analysis the voluntary, administrator-directed "principals' center." To a great extent, this paper is a selective case analysis of the development of The Principals' Center that serves the New Orleans, Louisiana area with comparative commentary on its close relative and spiritual progenitor, The Harvard Principals' Center. Examples are also drawn from recently organized principals' institutes and academies at other universities and state departments of education.

A framework for analysis is borrowed from economic and political theories of group formation; the conceptual base of the theories applied here rests on propositions about incentive and exchange relationships between organizers and individuals who are potential members or contributors. Theories of groups have typically been applied to the activities of organized political interest groups but serve well to understand the behavior of voluntary, non-lobbying professional organizations. Observational data concerning The Principals' Center in New Orleans were gathered by the author, who served as the Center's planning and fund-raising coordinator during its developmental year (1981-82) and as a member of its board of directors in its first two years of operation (1982-84). Comparative commentary about other providers of administrative inservice comes from published sources and the author's conversations with personnel at those sites. As a preface to the discussion of the organizational development of the newer inservice vehicles in educational administration, I offer a brief history of The Principals' Center in New Orleans and lay out the essential tenets from the theories of groups that will give shape to the closing analyses.

Development and Early Years of The Principals' Center (New Orleans)

Between 1979 and 1981, several elementary school principals in the New Orleans Public Schools and private independent schools in the New Orleans area developed a professional friendship that led to their meeting about once a month to discuss factors in their work—severe problems they were having and particularly effective changes that had taken place at their schools. During this time they were attracted to the ideas in Roland Barth's book, Run, School, Run (1980), on his experiences as an elementary school principal and, through one of the New Orleans principals who knew Barth from the days when they were colleagues in the Newton Public Schools, arrangements were made to have Barth visit the schools of these principals. In the course of preparing for the visit, the New Orleans

group discovered that Barth had assumed a position at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University where he was developing a novel program for Boston area principals that would create informal social and learning opportunities for those who managed schools. It appeared to the New Orleans principals that this new organization, called by Barth a "principals' center" on the model of the teachers' center, represented an institutionalized format for expanding and spreading to a more inclusive set of principals the kinds of services the New Orleans group were providing each other on an individual basis. In the spring of 1981, two months before Barth's visit to the New Orleans principals' schools, the group hastily arranged for Barth to make a public address on the planning for the Boston center. It was at this point that the author, a new assistant professor of educational administration at Tulane University in New Orleans, began his involvement with the development work that led to the establishment of The Principals' Center in New Orleans.

About 150 principals attended a May, 1981 meeting and through a post-session questionnaire encouraged the organizing of a learning and mutually supportive organization for principals in New Orleans. The five original sponsors worked during the summer of 1981 to set up a planning committee consisting of 12 principals or assistant principals and the author to define the purposes and goals of The Center, raise enough money to support planning activities during the 1981-82 school year, and determine the legal and operational governance structures of The Center. By the fall of 1982 that committee had decided that a first year program would consist of two presentations by persons from outside the New Orleans area and as many local workshops/discussion sessions as could be generated; it also established a newsletter through which the organization could become visible and communicate its activities to potential members and participants. The committee raised about $20,000 from New Orleans business people for the planning year, of which some would carry over into a projected $25,000 budget for the first operational year (1982-83). And the committee adopted articles of incorportation and by-laws establishing itself as a

not-for-profit, unaffiliated educational organization whose governance would be exercised by a dues-paying membership who would elect 15 principals to a board of directors, to be supplemented with 3 non-principal members appointed by the elected board. The principalship seats on the board of directors are divided among public, parochial, and private-independent schools, and during its first two years of operation, the Board has chosen a university professor, a banking executive, and a certified public accountant to serve with the 15 principals on the board. A committee associated with the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce was instrumental in identifying the businessmen who would become members of the Center's Board, and it provided entree to most of the businesses and foundations that eventually contributed to the Center.

In its first two years The Center has settled upon a format of bringing outside "major" speakers/workshop leaders twice a year and organizing smaller programs during the course of the school year. In 1982-83, The Center sponsored one-day sessions with Barry Jentz—a Boston-area management consultant who has adapted several useful problem-solving and communcations techniques for school administration—and Professor Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot from the Harvard Faculty, who discussed the nature and outcomes of her research on "good high schools." During the 1983-84 program year, Laura Knox (director of the Parent Involvement Project at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University) has made two presentations to The Center around questions of teacher morale and instructional improvement that she developed with Nashville area principals in the course of her work on a federally funded parent project. About 15 New Orleans area principals or school-related people have offered single- and multi-session programs on a variety of subjects including school effectiveness, computer usage for administrative purposes, national commission reports, classroom management, instructional change, listening and message-sending techniques, and school visitation. Programs are arranged by a committee composed of Center directors and other volunteer principals, and major

programs that cost large amounts of money to conduct are approved by the Board of Directors. The Center has one employee, an administrative assistant who fulfills the clerical needs of The Center; otherwise, virtually all other program activities are accomplished by the officers and members of the Center's Board of Directors. The Center has garnered between 150 and 175 members in each of its first two operational years. Current members pay a $25 membership dues and attend local programs free of charge, with reduced rates to major programs with external presentors. Non-members can attend all Center programs but pay fees from $5 to $40 to do so.

While The Harvard Principals' Center served as a model for the Center in New Orleans and there remain some interrelationships between the two centers, the development of The Harvard Center has taken different turns at several points. Barth's first options seemed to require that he raise external money from businesses, foundations, and school districts to underwrite the costs at Harvard, much as was done in New Orleans. However, Harvard's Graduate School of Education, in the end, brought The Harvard Center under its aegis as part of its large "leadership program," and the Graduate School has funded each of the first three years at levels of $90,000 - $100,000. These levels of funding have allowed The Harvard Center to maintain two full-time directors and five part-time employees. Due in part to the university's funding, the initial planning and direction of The Harvard Center was determined by university-based personnel; through recent changes, however, some of its governance and program planning have been transferred to a board of practicing school principals. The program of The Harvard Center has taken advantage of the Harvard faculty for many of its sessions. And during The Harvard Center's first operational year, which was The New Orleans Center's development year (1981-82), one of the group of New Orleans principals most interested in starting a New Orleans center was invited to take a six-months sabbatical leave in residence at The Harvard Center as its first "Visiting Practitioner."

The Relevance of Theories of Groups in the Study of Voluntary Inservice Organizations

Interest groups—whether they are oriented toward influencing the behavior of decision makers in government in order to improve the welfare of their members (as in the case of traditional lobbying organizations) or whether they are created to provide developmental services to a client group (as in the case of the principals' centers under discussion here)—require a financial base and a membership group. Even with the loftiest and most universally acceptable intentions, organizations do not survive, much less prosper, without some means of paying organizational overhead and securing the purposive involvement of members expressed as money contributions (dues and donations) or time (participation) that help the group accomplish its goals.[2]

In order for an individual to incur the costs of membership or participation, that individual either must be coerced, or must be reasonably assured that he or she will get something in return for a voluntary contribution—something that would not otherwise be forthcoming without the individual's voluntarily incurring the costs of participation. The latter condition is discussed by Olson (1965) who notes that whenever an individual cannot be excluded from the provision of a good, he or she will not voluntarily pay for its production but will, instead, act as a "free rider." A second condition affecting non-coerced contributions toward the provision of goods has to do with the probability that an individual's contribution will be sufficiently influential to increase the likelihood that the good will, in fact, be produced. According to Frolich et al. (1971), one can calculate a probability function with a threshold beyond which an individual's participation will be forthcoming.

In spite of our understanding of the "free rider" problem and the probability calculus, organizers of voluntary professional improvement groups are not assured of ready solutions to their quandries of how to generate members. Newer organizations often must make their services available to all potential members in order to "give them a taste" of the benefits as a way of enticing them to join; such organizations, then, actually take the potential member along for a certain number of "free rides" before they begin to limit the availability of their services to paying members. On the issue of assuring potential members that they will get what they want by joining the organization, group organizers quickly learn that the larger the potential audience, the harder it is to identify a single service objective around which all members might rally; to the extent that goal-focus is problematic, the organization will have difficulty projecting itself as an effective collective means to a common end, and potential members, unsure that their interests will be served, will not have a probability threshold low enough to elicit their contributions.

The organization that cannot make its benefits exclusive (at least initially) and cannot find a single mission as its raison d'etre must turn, instead, to the use of incentives to elicit contributions from potential members. Wilson (1973) postulated that three categories of incentives are available to organizations to induce individuals to contribute membership dues and participate in organization activities: material, solidary, and purposive. Material incentives, according to Wilson, are goods or services given to members that have an exchange value in the marketplace; they are provisions for which an individual would otherwise have to pay. For example, political parties are sometimes in a position to offer patronage positions in return for significant contributions to the ogranization; professional organizations often arrange for their members to receive discounts on travel, insurance, and merchandise as an inducement for their contributions.

Yet not all individuals join organizations because of the prospect of material returns nor do all organizations have material benefits to dispense. In joining certain

organizations, an individual can improve his opportunities for social recognition. Wilson labels this kind of incentive, "solidary." On an individual and selective basis, a certain few persons in an organization can receive the title and recognition that comes with holding an organizational office. For organizations in which social or professional notables hold membership, all other participants can enjoy the collective benefits that come with associating with persons of higher status, however that status is defined.

Finally, organizations can offer purposive incentives to the extent that they represent the advancement of a worthwhile cause. Thus, individuals who will join groups that advocate environmental protection, arms control, or educational programs for the disadvantaged feel that they are expressing a value position of overriding importance. Individuals will, for purposive reasons, join organizations that appear to have little chance of success but give organizational participants the opportunity to "make a statement" about an issue of social, moral, or existential significance.

In the end, two general issues dominate the theory and practice of organizational development among interest groups. Organizations must have a supply of resources if they are to maintain any level of activity. They generally have two options for accumulating enough of an operating budget to hire personnel, materials and space: one is funding from sources that support the goals of the organization but are not, themselves, potential direct participants; a second source of funds is a participant group who may be organized as a dues-paying membership or as a consumer-client group who pay on a quid-pro-quo basis for the services they receive from the organization. The ultimate question in the growth or survivability of an interest group is whether or not its major suppliers of operating funds think that the group is achieving its goals.

A voluntary professional inservice organization, by definition, must eventually prove that it can "process" a certain number of persons through its training program to claim some degree of success. If external donors are not convinced of the organization's

efficacy they will withdraw their contributions, and if the potential dues-paying members do not find that the group meets their professional needs, they will discontinue their involvement.

Incentives and the Development of Voluntary Inservice Organizations

Administrative inservice programs organized by local school districts have often been advanced in such a way as to compel their employees to participate by making performance evaluations, if not job security, dependent upon their attending prescribed professional development sessions. A certain amount of coerced participation is common to most principals. Superintendents, for example, often require principals to attend district inservice programs without consulting individual principals to see if their participation is either warranted or freely offered. State boards of education may make similar claims on principals. Although current state programs designed to re-train principals in leadership skills most often are voluntary or provide some form of compensation, certain newer proposals for state principals' academies have pinned participation to the maintenance of certification.

Inservice programs sponsored by non-governmental institutions cannot use coercive measures to ensure participation; they are voluntary, by definition. The Principals' Center in New Orleans was founded, in part, as a reaction against the mandatory inservice model (Charmichael, 1982). Its presentation to funding sources was built on the platform that significant innovations and behavioral change among school personnel do not result from mandatory re-education. Yet its founders became aware from the start that the active membership of most principals in the New Orleans area—potentially 600-800 administrators—was unassured and, equally important, their attendance at and participation in Center programs was even less certain. In fact, during the first two years

the bi-annual major presentations by persons of national stature have attracted progressively fewer and fewer participants, down from 80 at the first event to 40-50 at each of the last sessions. Programs offered by local specialists (principals, university faculty, other specialists) have average audiences of fewer than 10. It is amply clear in this, the third year since the Center's development was first discussed, that this "idea whose time had come" is not guaranteed success. The prospects for the Principals' Center in New Orleans and others of similar origins may, however, be better understood through the application of incentive theories.

Material Incentives

When institutions cannot or choose not to compel participation, they must provide incentives in order to generate membership activity. The most effective kind of incentive for occupational groups is the material incentive, through which the institution provides cash or something with a cash value (were it to be acquired in the marketplace) in return for an individual's participation. The legislature in Louisiana, for example, created a Professional Improvement Program for teachers and administrators that offers a 5%-15% increase in salary to educators who design and complete a program of inservice courses and workshops; furthermore, to increase the likelihood that educators will incur the costs of initiating their participation (by sorting through the hundreds of activities that are available), the legislature authorized the salary increases to be effective during the first year of participation—before any coursework or workshops have been completed.

Voluntary settings, like The Principals' Center, obviously do not have the legal or fiscal capacity to induce participation by the same means. If they are not sanctioned by a licensing bureau, they do not offer certifying credit for those who hold membership or attend events. If they operate independently of a credit granting academic institution, the new inservice providers cannot return course credits for participation. At present, school-based

administrators who join the New Orleans Principals' Center and attend its activities do not receive formal credit or compensation of any sort for their participation. A sort of "discount-in-kind" program allows dues-paying members to attend Center programs and events at reduced rates and constitutes a form of limited internal incentive structure. The net effect of this incentive is that it reduces the net outlay of cash required of an individual principal or his/her supporting school, but it does not represent a separable material incentive with exchange value outside the organization.

Within the great middle ground between the inservice approach funded by the state and the voluntary, non-affiliated program represented by The Principals' Center in New Orleans lie several other kinds of inservice settings that vary in their used of material incentives. The Harvard Principals' Center, for example, includes in its membership package library privileges at the well-endowed Gutman Library in the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Because most potential members come from that center's local/regional base, access to the Gutman Library is easy to take advantage of. Another program that uses more traditional incentives to induce participation in its inservice opportunities is the Peabody Principals' Institute at Vanderbilt University. Peabody brings school administrators onto campus for a summer course of study in "school leadership" (with a curriculum sensitive to the teacher- and school-effectiveness research findings) that offers participants graduate credits and a certificate of attendance. These rewards serve as material incentives because one or both can usually be traded for incremental gains on the salary scale in public schools and may be used as bargaining chips in private schools.

It is interesting to those of us who are observing the development of The Principals' Center in New Orleans that its governing board has rejected with consistent firmness the suggestion, made a couple times each year, that The Center ally itself with a credit-granting institution or program. With enough planning The Center could get its

programs approved by the state committee overseeing the Louisiana Professional Improvement Program—the one inservice option presently thought to drain off the time and energy principals might put into participation in the Center. At least public school principals could be enticed into Center participation in return for "PIPS" points negotiable for salary increases.

The primary rationale for remaining credit-free is that the Center wants to prove itself as a "professional" alternative to the "commercial" inservice represented by the state program. The Center's defiance, as we shall see, rests on the proposition that it has compelling "purposive" incentives to offer which require more time to cultivate and clarify. In the meantime, The Center maintains its operations with business and foundation support, intending to build membership numbers and allegiance with the lure of professional and psychic benefits alone.

Solidary Incentives

In addition to material returns for participation, some inservice programs can generate participation because of "honors"—to use a Weberian concept (Gerth & Mills, 1958, p. 181)—that come with involvement. Almost every local organization has a small set of governance positions to dispense that carry individual recognition for office holding. These positions, of course, require somewhat larger contribution costs from the special cadre of members who hold them, yet the opportunity for such recognition can induce both their joining and their extra participation. In addition to the rather selective form of honor that can be dispensed through officerships, a more collective form of solidary incentive is granted by the organization that in itself represents a valued status to potential participants. The Harvard Principals' Center, for example, can trade on its elitist name, and, to the extent that school principals in the Boston area feel they can gain status enhancement by association with that center, the mere inclusion of "Harvard" in the center's identify is

sufficient to induce some memberships. The Peabody Principals' Institute enjoys elevated status based on the positive national attention Peabody College for Teachers has gained and the newer enhancement of identity associated with its place in Vanderbilt University.

The Principals' Center in New Orleans has only a thin veneer of institutional status. It maintains temporary office space donated to it by Tulane University, but its board of directors has explicitly elected not to seek affiliation with Tulane, the most prestigious institution in the area. Most of this guardedness results from a conviction that emerged at the Center's chartering that principals must maintain governing control of The Center. Institutional affiliation, it is felt, would automatically come with strings attached. And the independent impulse was reinforced after stories from on-site witnesses at the Harvard Center reported that its "field-based" advisors had to negotiate their share of the decision making with the Harvard Graduate School after it decided to underwrite the Harvard Center's costs.

When institutional identity is exhausted as a source of solidary incentives to attract participants, the status of individuals associated with an inservice program can provide a solidary supplement. A well-known reputed local principal recognized for his or her progressive management can lure other principals into membership and can attract external funding for the organization. To some degree, the New Orleans Center enjoys the solidary incentives that come with its early identification with a few notable principals, and it has parlayed their involvement into two successful years of fund-raising. One of the moving forces and most active fund raisers is a principal who has published a widely read book about her "adventures" in creating a magnet elementary school in the French Quarter region of New Orleans (Carmichael, 1981); that principal was also known to certain of the funding sources because she had solicited support for her school at previous times. Another principal associated with the early development of The Center has

entree with business people oriented toward the more elite private schools in the area because he holds a lower school principalship in one such school.

Compared to its role in fund-raising, the solidary incentives represented by "elite" principal-members of The Center in enticing other principals to join and participate is somewhat more complex. For sure, certain administrators were attracted to serving on the Center's board of directors because they knew they would be associating with (and would be identified with) a few specific well-known principals. These "model" administrators, however, are viewed by large numbers of other principals as either privileged or iconoclasts—privileged in the sense that they have the best endowed schools and can afford to spend time enriching them, or iconoclasts in the sense that their unusual personalities lead them to operate on the risky outer boundaries of what the larger public systems will tolerate in administrator behavior. Well aware of such a potential "reverse" solidary incentive, The Center's first board worked to recruit directors and members among subgroups, particularly in the public schools. Younger black principals in Orleans parish, for example, were identified as a constituency The Center should take into account. The experience of The Principals' Center suggests, then, that solidary incentives involve more complex strategems when the reference group is not unified on at least one status dimension of major importance. As with material incentives, the voluntary inservice organization represented by The Principals' Center may have significant obstacles to overcome if it is to make use of solidary inducements to generate members and participants.

Purposive Incentives

From research and rhetoric on leadership and the motivating impulses of individual school administrators come the third kinds of inducements for membership and participation in voluntary, inservice organizations and programs, purposive incentives. It is significant that definitions of purpose are usually so varied that this kind of incentive has, at best, a problematic capacity to induce participation.

Most inservice programs for principals are designed to offer a curriculum of "generic" management skill training and school-oriented "instructional leadership." This combination usually produces some kind of admixture of training and conceptual studies in interpersonal communication, motivational techniques, problem-solving and decision-making processes, and political sensitivity. These subject and skill areas are extrapolated by scholars and trainers from a "knowledge base" grounded in school effectiveness research and a recent attraction to applications from business and industrial management. They represent modern, forward-thinking topics in a profession thought to have gone stale in its isolationist routines. And they are often advanced as attributes of educational/professional quality—a matter with significant moral valence.

The program of The Harvard Principals' Center is embedded in the Harvard Graduate School of Education's new thrust into the study of and action-research on "leadership" that Harvard announced with some fanfare at the 1982 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. The curriculum of the summer Principals' Institute at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, has been heralded in similar terms by a feature writer for Education Week and an editor of The New York Times. State funded academies and foundation training programs set out the same leadership fare and advertise its value with the same arguments.

The small group of originating members of The Principals' Center in New Orleans were, by and large, in the change-oriented progressive mold. They forwarded the Center idea as an opportunity for putting principals in touch with the "new management." They also attributed to the center model the magnetic potential of bringing principals together to learn from and support each other. These latter purposes emerge from the sense that school administrators are isolated from each other, a condition that both limits their practical learning to whatever they can derive from trial-and-error and frustrates their needs to communicate with someone who can empathize with their work demands.

Having few, if any, material or solidary incentives in which to trade, The Principals' Center in New Orleans has become an organization in quest of purpose. During its first two years of program operation, it ventured out in a sequence of directions, trying to find the single identity or combination of purposes that would attract principals to its membership and programs. For sure, The Center enrolled reasonable numbers in its membership each year: about 150 in 1982-83 and 135 in 1983-84. The membership fee is nominal (now $25.00) so the monetary cost to potential participants has not become a factor. But, the real issue of participation is expressed, instead, as attendance at programs sponsored by The Center. The numbers at sessions given by "headliners"--people with a national billing and special Center publicity -have fallen off from about 80 to as few as 40 in two years' time. Attendance at smaller workshops offered by local specialists have also been lower than the Center's board finds acceptable. Both conditions prevail even though the subjects or issues presented have been determined by a sensitive reading of a "needs assessment" of all potential members conducted during the Center's planning year (1981-82). For what it divulges about practicing administrators and the incentives in organizational life, the process of self-analysis and experimentation undertaken by the Center's Board of Directors is highly instructive.

The first programs offered by the Center were proposed by its original advocates. Those programs, almost without exception, had a self-reflective, therapeutic flavor to them. A management consultant, a national program director, and several local leaders who presented the first Center sessions all exhorted their audiences to examine their assumptions about others, disgnose their own behavior, and express and listen to feelings as much as factual data if they were truly going to "lead their schools," improve instruction, and build teacher morale. Reassessing the programatic themes of the Center, the majority of the Board's members in recent months has leveed specific criticisms about the "heavy handed," "demanding" nature of those sessions, wanting instead something more "concrete" and "applicable" or "lighter" and "socially-oriented." A businessman who serves as one of the

non-principal directors of the Center describes the entrepreneurs who started the Center and influenced its earlier programs as an "elite" who have a vision of the Center's purpose different from the "common-man" principal who makes up the potential membership.

Two purposive agendas are frequently advanced as alternatives to the change oriented and psychologically based content of the earliest programs. One would have the Center sponsor purely social events, through which it could be identified as the nurturing "home-base" for otherwise isolated, lonely, and pressured school heads. The other plan would stress new learning but of a more "technical" sort; in this programmatic mode principals could use the Center to find out about curricula, scheduling, evaluation, equipment and technologies that might be adapted from use in one setting to their own school. One version of the latter kind of purpose would have the Center operate as a clearinghouse; principals in the New Orleans area could register whatever is exemplary in their schools in a reference file at the Center, and principals in search of a solution to a problem could consult the Center to establish contact with a potential "helper" in the field. On a less individualized base, the "technical" service Center idea has also been proposed in a "lunch-and-learn" format that would bring small groups of principals together over lunch who would then spend the afternoon at a host's school to witness a practice or device on-site.

The mild, but early, identity crisis suffered by The Principals' Center in New Orleans is indicative of the significant array of interests among principals and the differences in their orientations, differences that affect a principal's willingness to contribute time or money to engage in voluntary professional activity. It does appear that no single, compelling purposive goal—whether of diffuse social value or with selective individual returns—will be easy for the Center to capture and build on.

Beyond Survival--Issues of Effectiveness and Improvement in Voluntary Inservice Organizations

Willis Hawley (1977) noted, in a concluding chapter to a major volume applying political analysis in education, that the occasions taken by political scientists to scrutinize educational policy making, governance structures, and theories of democracy in educational settings have produced a large and growing literature for the field. He points out, nevertheless, that practically none of that scholarship has entertained questions of effect or outcome using children's learning as the criterion measure. In similar terms, whatever it is that group theories tell us about the prospects for survival and growth among voluntary inservice organizations, they do not help us assess the effectiveness of such institutions in improving education. This is due to a variety of reasons. First, effectiveness is difficult to define (as desired change in managerial behavior? student achievement gain?) and equally difficult to measure. It is simply that these matters of evaluation lie beyond the scope of group and incentive theories. Second, effectiveness becomes an elusive commodity for judging organizational activity if an organization has multiple purposes or goals. Even if we could define and measure each goal individually, we would also need to calculate a composite cost/benefit index to make a final, single statement about an organization's value.

Because change and its causes are so problematic, we tend to judge organizations by using more internal than external criteria of value. For example, organizational success, if not effectiveness, is often measured as volume or frequency of participation. Funding sources outside the membership itself will use this yardstick to assess the wisdom of their investing. In fact, when fund-raisers for The Principals' Center in New Orleans go back to previous contributors, the Center representatives are usually asked about the number of dues-paying members The Center has attracted and frequency of programs and their attendance. This measure of "effectiveness" turns out to be the most easily calibrated and most visible characteristic of an organization.

A similar measure of success that often interests potential donors and supporters is the total amount of resources available to the group in any given year or over a span of years. Regardless of the educational effect of the resources or the volume of activities they are funding, the income for the organization can be taken as a proxy criterion of "effectiveness". Viewed this way, for example, the Harvard Center's budgets of $90,000-$100,000 might represent an effect five times as great as the New Orleans Principals' Center's where operations have consumed no more than $20,000 in a year.

Beyond the question of effect, the creation of the newest settings for professional inservice raise interesting questions about the nature of educational improvement and innovation. If one impetus for the invention of the principal-governed, voluntary organization is to tailor programs and services to the individual needs of school-site administrators—in direct contrast to system mandated, universal professional re-training—the voluntary organization operates outside managerial models based on tight supervision, diagnosis, and correction. Voluntary, self-improvement assumes that the individual can best assess his or her own weaknesses and choose the most appropriate means of remediation. This model assumes that individuals will attempt to improve themselves in some reasonably acceptable areas of managerial skill and "instructional leadership." To the extent that this assumption about individuals' motivation and behavior is unfounded, the voluntary model will not produce educational improvement on a broad scale, even if the organizers provide sufficent incentives for attracting wide participation.

One purpose advanced for The Principals' Center in New Orleans is its social function and support apparatus for isolated administrators. Here the goal of educational improvement would, presumably, be indirect. It would be a by-product of improved psychological security resulting from the community of professionals that the voluntary organization would attempt to create. The success of this purposive base for principals' inservice, then, would depend upon a "consensual community" or at least a "professional/social community" that would be achieveable among the general population

of school principals. This purpose may have the greatest prospect for accomplishment, but the experience of The Principals' Center in New Orleans suggests that it has at least one inherent problem. The originating few members and most active directors of The Center—the "elite," as described by one non-principal member of the Board—express little interest in "purely social" opportunities for The Center. Only if such events are conceived as helping to build a solidary foundation for The Center's professional learning program, then they become instrumental and acceptable, in the eyes of these organizational leaders.

Disaggregated provisions for professional inservice have generated a wonderful array of models, rich in their variety and differences. The voluntary, self-governed kinds are conspicuous in their uniqueness and deserve our attention for what they can offer. They also represent yet another medium through which we can get to know the interpersonal and professional personas of the collective of people who are school principals.

NOTES

1. I wish to thank my colleagues, Jean King, Nancy Nystrom, and Sam Stringfield, for their comments on this draft of the paper. All of the paper's shortcomings, however, remain my own.

2. For a well integrated discussion of group and incentive theories on which this section is based, see Paul Peterson's paper, "Incentive Theories and Group Influence: James Wilson's Political Organizations and the End of Group Theory" (1975).

REFERENCES

Barth, Roland Run, School, Run. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Bidwell, Charles E. "The School as a Formal Organization" In Handbook of Organizations, edited by James G. March, pp. 972-1022. Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1965.

"The School as a Formal Organization: Some New Thoughts" In Problem-Finding in Educational Administration, edited by Glenn L. Immegart and William Lowe Boyd, pp. 111-131. Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1979.

Boyd, William L. & Crowson, Robert L. "The Changing Conception and Practice of Public School Administration" In Review of Research in Education, volume 9, edited by David C. Berliner, pp. 311-373. Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association, 1981.

Bridges, Edwin M. "The Principalship as a Career" In The Principalship in Metropolitan Schools, edited by Donald A. Erickson and Theodore L. Reller, pp. 1-21. Berkeley: McCutchan, 1979.

Carmichael, Lucianne B. McDonogh 15: Becoming a School New York: Avon Books, 1981.

"Leaders as Learners: A Possible Dream" Educational Leadership 40 (October 1982):58-59.

Cohen, Michael "Effective Schools: What the Research Says" Today's Education 70 (April/May 1981):58GS-61GS.

Froelich, Norman; Oppenheimer, Joe A.; & Young, Oran R. Political Leadership and Collective Goods Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971.

Gerth, H.H. & Mills, C. Wright From Max Weber New York: Oxford University Press, 1958.

Gross, Neal & Herriot, Robert E. Staff Leadership in Public Schools: A Sociological Inquiry New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965.

Hodgkinson, Harold "Education as a Disaggregated Institution" Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Houston, 1982.

Manasse, A. Lorri "Effective Principals: Effective at What?" Principal (March 1982): 10-15.

Morris, Van Cleve; Crowson, Robert L.; Hurwitz, Emanual, Jr.; & Porter-Gehie, Cynthia The Urban Principal Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1981.

National Institute of Education "NIE Directory of Inservice Training Programs for Principals" Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1982.

Olson, Mancur, Jr. The Logic of Collective Action Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.

Sarason, Seymour B. The Creation of Settings and the Future Societies San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972.

Shoemaker, Joan & Fraser, Hugh W. "What Principals Can Do: Some Implications from Studies of Effective Schooling" Phi Delta Kappan 63 (November 1981):178-182.

Southern Regional Education Board "The Preparation and Selection of School Principals" Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board, 1983.

Weick, Karl E. "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems" Administrative Science Quarterly 21 (1976):1-19.

Wilson, James Q. Political Organizations New York: Basic Books, 1973.